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ABSTRACT

The question of whether a coach should be eligible to obtain tenure is receiving considerable attention throughout the educational community. For many years one of the strongest arguments for the inclusion of athletics in the academic world has been that athletics was an integral part of the physical education instructional program. When education was the major focus of intercollegiate programs, it seemed reasonable that personnel involved in coaching be eligible for tenure. It is however, extremely difficult at present to find an intercollegiate athletic program which can be classified as having educational outcomes as its major focus. Colleges and universities use athletics, instead, to gain publicity and national visibility. This change in the purpose of the athletic program has caused a change in the conduct of the programs and in the responsibilities of coaches. The athletic program has its own budget and its own facilities. Also, decisions regarding athletics do not go through regular academic channels. Usually, the athletic director reports directly to the president of the university or his designee. The evidence seems clear that intercollegiate athletic programs are now conducted as commercial enterprises with entertainment as the major focus of the program. Since tenure is designed for teaching faculty, it appears that coaches should not be eligible for tenure consideration. (JS)

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# TENURE AND THE COACH

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Tenure and the Coach

The question of whether a coach should be eligible to obtain tenure is receiving considerable attention throughout educational communities. The concept of tenure itself is also being examined but it is not the purpose of this article to explore these arguments. Rather it is to look at the reasons for decisions regarding the appropriateness of tenure for persons hired as coaches.

The usual interpretation of tenure is that it is designed to protect the academic freedom of teachers and to provide job security for teachers. Can the coach be considered a candidate for tenure in the same manner as teaching faculty? The answer can best be found by examining the purposes or outcomes of intercollegiate programs which in turn describe the responsibilities of the coach.

There are two basic purposes for which intercollegiate athletic programs can be established. One purpose has as its major focus educational outcomes. The other has as its major focus entertainment.

The question which must be asked and honestly answered is - are intercollegiate athletics today a part of the educational program of our colleges and universities or are they primarily for the entertainment of spectators? Are coaches performing the same kind of responsibilities as teaching faculty?

This question is one which professional physical educators are hesitant to discuss for the answers involve some cherished and long held concepts about athletics which do not always stand up well under close scrutiny.

For many years one of the strongest arguments for the inclusion of athletics in the academic world has been that athletics was an integral

part of the physical education instructional program. Athletics has been considered as the apex of our instructional triangle - a program for the highly skilled student in much the same fashion as programs for talented students in art, music, or debate. Participation in intercollegiate athletics has been considered a valid part of the learning experience. At some institutions academic credit for participation in athletics has been given. Historically athletics and physical education have been administratively housed together. Faculty in these departments had teaching as well as coaching assignments.

When education was the major focus of the intercollegiate program, that is, when the program was designed and operated so that the purposes contributed directly to educational outcomes, rather than incidently, then it appeared that the coach was no different from other faculty assigned to work with talented students. Under these conditions it seemed both reasonable and proper that personnel involved in coaching should be eligible to achieve tenure in the same manner as their colleagues in other departments.

Realistically speaking, it is extremely difficult to find an intercollegiate athletic program which can be classified as having educational outcomes as its major focus. While professional physical educators and others may still subscribe to the belief in an educational focus for athletics most of us realize this is simply not the case. The questioning of tenure for coaches arises precisely because of the recognition that these programs differ in purpose from academic programs.

Colleges and universities have used athletics for purposes other than education. Athletics have been used to gain publicity and national visability.

Many institutions have become better known for their athletic programs than for their academic programs. This change in the purposes of athletic programs has caused a change in the conduct of these programs and in the responsibilities of coaches. Persons are employed with full time coaching assignments. Several coaches may be employed for the same sport and none teach in credit hour producing academic programs. Athletic programs have become separated administratively from Physical Education departments. The athletic program has its own budget (several times larger than an academic department) and has its own facilities. The Athletic Director reports directly to the President of the university or his designee. Decisions regarding athletics do not go through regular academic channels. The purpose of these athletic programs is to provide entertainment and revenue, not education. Athletic programs are run as commercial concerns and hopefully are profit making operations. Few if any coaches talk of the educational values of such programs unless they are on the banquet circuit. It may be true that participants in athletics learn from these experiences but the main purpose of athletics is to win, not to provide education.

In the highly sophisticated world of athletic entertainment, coaches are not hired on the basis of academic credentials but on their previous won-lost records as coaches. They are retained or fired on the basis of this same criterion. They are frequently hired for a term of three to five years with guaranteed twelve month contracts and option for renewal. This is not the kind of contract the average college professor has.

Practically all coaches of the revenue producing sports (football

and basketball) have full time coaching appointments only and are in no way connected with the academic side of the university. This is true even in institutions which have not achieved status as national athletic powers.

Thus over the years coaching has moved away from the instructional programs and indeed from close contact with physical education departments.

Some coaches of the so called minor sports (non revenue producing sports) may still hold joint appointments in athletics and frequently physical education. These kind of joint appointments usually entail rank and tenure tracks for the teaching portion of the assignment. Individuals holding these appointments have enjoyed the glamour of coaching and the security afforded teaching faculty. When the coach was no longer successful or when the pressures of coaching became uncomfortable the coach had only to request a change in assignment to that of full time teaching. Because of his tenure as a teacher these requests have been honored.

Two factors which are in operation now make it necessary to rethink the whole situation of the coach and tenure. First, the implementation of Title IX has given great empetus to a rapid growth in intercollegiate athletics for women. With this growth has been a corresponding increase in the number of coaches. Few of these women coaches hold full time coaching assignments. The majority have joint appointments in teaching and coaching. The teaching assignment for women coaches is usually on the tenure track which means there will be the possibility of having to absorb these women into full time teaching positions at a later date.

The second factor is curtailed university budgets, a reflection of the state of our national economy. This means that administrators at all levels are taking a hard look at tenure, for a tenured faculty is expensive to maintain and does not permit easy flexibility in bringing in new persons with new skills. There is a growing concern on the part of many physical education administrators that the increasing numbers of part time teacher-coaches could result in a department becoming "tenured in" with former coaches.

While we may still wistfully claim educational outcomes for intercollegiate programs the evidence does not support this view. The excesses associated with intercollegiate programs - exploitation of players, high costs, doubtful recruitment practices, the win at any cost syndrome - have been well documented. These kinds of practices are not commonly associated with the techniques used by educators to achieve educational outcomes.

Thus it appears coaching is not the same as teaching. The programs are basically different in purpose as well as in practice even though the materials and skills which both use are similar. Coaching must be recognized as a hazardous occupation as is the entire entertainment profession. Success in the entertainment field is frequently of short duration, although there are notable exceptions.

Since the original concept of tenure was to provide security and freedom for the teaching faculty of an institution it appears that the coaching personnel should not be included in tenure provisions.

Perhaps persons holding joint appointments in coaching and in academic teaching assignments should be eligible for tenure consideration but only in the teaching portion of their assignment. When and/or if

these individuals wish to change from coaching to full time teaching; the change cannot be considered automatic. It should occur only if the department has a need for the special services and skills of the individual and if there is a legitimate opening in the department. In other words the academic department should not feel obligated to absorb the coach if indeed the coach will not fill a need of that department. Such an individual, if he has achieved tenure in that teaching portion of his assignment, should be retained for that portion only, not as a full time faculty member.

This may be a difficult position for women to accept as it pertains to their coaching assignments. Traditionally women physical educators have held very closely to the concept of the importance of educational outcomes for athletics. However, the old arguments become meaningless as women's intercollegiate programs mirror those of the men's.

It is time the distinction between teaching as a profession and coaching as a profession is clearly recognized. They are not the same. Each has its own distinct purpose and methods of operation. The differences between the two make it clear that tenure is not an appropriate condition for the coach. As long as athletic programs remain outside the academic stream then the personnel in these programs should not expect to be included under the tenure umbrella.